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PROSPECTS FOR COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN THE GULF  
FOLLOWING THE KUWAIT CRISIS

BY

COLONEL ABDULLAH AMOR AL-MARHUBY  
Sultanate of Oman

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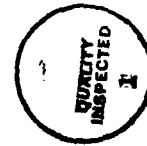
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PROSPECTS FOR COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN THE GULF  
FOLLOWING THE KUWAIT CRISIS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Colonel Abdullah Amor Al-Marhuby  
Sultanate of Oman

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## ABSTRACT

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The Kuwait crisis has highlighted several weaknesses in pre-crisis arrangements and lessons relevant to formulating a new strategy. The first concern is to increase the size and capability of the GCC Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) in order to deter internal as well as external threats. If deterrence to external threats again fails in the future, the RDF should be capable of providing sufficient resistance until the arrival of outside assistance. In order to avoid having outside forces permanently located in the region, the GCC states will have to provide increased levels of Host Nation Support (HNS) to facilitate rapid deployment of allied forces.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The British Rule

The Gulf has, for centuries, attracted the attention of leading nations of the world. The Portuguese, British, Dutch, French, Turks, and Americans are some of the major players in the history of the Gulf.

As a reaction to the Ottoman Empire's seizure of Constantinople and closure of the route for Europeans to India and the Middle East, the Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, discovered the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope in 1497. With the help of a reputed Omani sailor, Ahmed bin Majid, he succeeded in arriving in India, thus avoiding confrontation with Ottoman Turks. In order to secure their strategic positions, the Portuguese were quick to realize the importance of Hormuz at the mouth of the Gulf. The Portuguese domination of the Gulf lasted for over a century, despite the resistance of the local population.

The influence of the British in the Gulf started with the arrival of their navy when Britain made an alliance with the Persians, aimed at wresting the Port of Hormuz from the grip of the Portuguese. As a reward, the Persians gave the East India Company rights to establish an agency at Bandar Abbas.

Once Britain was able to get a foothold on Gulf soil, it extended its influence, first by eliminating rivals, and secondly by signing treaties with the local rulers. In 1625, following a turn of events on the European continent, Britain succeeded in minimizing Portuguese and Dutch influence. France remained the

only European power competing with Britain by the late 18th century.

The first treaty between Britain and Oman, aimed at preventing the French from competing in Gulf trade and from using Oman as a stepping-stone to India, was concluded in 1798. In January 1820, the tribal chiefs of Abu Dhabi, Bani Yas, and Dubai signed a treaty with Britain which gave freedom to its shipping in the Gulf.

During the early 18th century, new Arab powers from the central Arabian Peninsula began to emerge. The two main factions, the Al Sabah and Al Khalifa, settled in parts along the eastern coast of the Gulf. The Al Thani family established themselves in the Qatar Peninsula, and they shared in the trading activities of the region.

This period was in no way free of tribal strife which prompted the British to intervene in 1835, arranging a maritime truce between the Shaikhs. The truce was renewed annually, and in May 1853 a Treaty of Maritime Peace in Perpetuity was concluded. As a result, the region became known collectively as the "Trucial States."

Under these treaties, the conduct of internal affairs was left entirely in the Shaikhs' hands, while Britain assumed responsibility for external affairs and defense. This responsibility was undertaken by the British East India Company until 1873 when the British Government in India took over. When India gained independence in 1947, the British Foreign Office in London assumed direct responsibility for Gulf affairs. There was



a resident British Commissioner in Bahrain and Political Agents, respectively, in Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. In 1948, Britain appointed an Agent in Sharjah where the Royal Air Force (RAF) base was located. This situation continued until countries of the region gained their independence in 1971.<sup>1</sup>

### Oil vs Politics

In 1911, Sir Winston Churchill persuaded the British Royal Navy to abandon coal and use oil as the basis of propulsion energy. This led to the formation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, in which the British Government had an ownership interest, for the express purpose of exploiting the crude oil reserves of Iran. The Persian Gulf was vital to Britain in the early twentieth century as a fueling station for the British fleet in protecting the Empire's route to India.

Britain continued to be the supreme power and monopolist in the Gulf, barring other nations' oil-producing companies from Gulf oil. The U.S. State Department objected to the British Foreign Office in the early 1920s on the exclusion of the American companies and insisted that the territory of the Ottoman Empire should be open for oil development to all of the nations of the world on an equal basis. (The entire area of the former territory of the Ottoman Empire looked like a potential "black gold" mine.) Meanwhile, American companies did win oil concessions in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia during the 1930s resulting in the formation, respectively, of BAPCO (the Bahrain American Petroleum Company) and ARAMCO (The Arabian American Company).

The British continued to dominate Iran's oil for nearly half a century until Iran nationalized the Anglo-Iranian company. The United States was very concerned about the Iranian nationalization and feared that if Washington allowed it, then other Gulf countries would follow suit. As a result, U.S. government officials debated the issue in January 1953 in the National Security Council and a paper was jointly issued by the Departments of State, Defense, and Interior which concluded that since oil was the principal source of wealth and income in the Middle Eastern oil-producing countries, their economic welfare and national existence depended upon the volume and disposition of oil produced. The operations of American companies in these countries were for all practical purposes instruments of U.S. foreign policy toward these countries. What they did and how they did it determined the strength of American ties with the Middle Eastern countries.

Iranian events resulted in two major consequences. First, the United States government realized that it could no longer manage its relationship with the Persian Gulf states through oil companies. It was forced into a more direct role in negotiating with these states. Oil production became more linked to decisions regarding arms and politics. The United States, therefore, became committed to monitoring the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf in hands friendly to the United States and its allies.<sup>2</sup>

#### Years of Independence

The adoption of the United Nations resolution calling for decolonization, coupled with Britain's economic crisis which

obliged her to cut back on overseas expenditures, prompted the British Labour Government in January 1968 to announce that its forces were withdrawing from bases in the Arabian Gulf area and that the UK would rescind all political treaties in the area by the end of 1971. Within a few weeks of the announcement, the rulers of the Emirates considered the formation of a federation. The proposed new federal state would be comprised of the emirates of Bahrain and Qatar (both of which later stood aside after three years of negotiations) and the six shaikhdoms of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Qawain, and Fujaira. On 27 February 1968, the rulers of those six shaikhdoms finally signed an agreement announcing the formation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). (Ras Al Khaimah subsequently joined the federation on 10 February 1972.) Separate independence for Bahrain and Qatar was declared on 14 August 1971 and 3 September 1971, respectively. The formation of the UAE was formally announced on 2 December 1971, an event terminating all the then existing treaties between Britain and the Trucial States. Once they became independent, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE joined the Arab League and the United Nations.

Kuwait had become independent much earlier, on 19 June 1961, and had joined the Arab League in July 1961 and the United Nations on 14 May 1963. Saudi Arabia had been independent since 23 September 1932. Oman's status was unique. It was an independent country bound by a friendship treaty signed with Britain in 1951. Oman joined the Arab League on 6 October 1971, and the United

Nations on 7 October 1971 after Sultan Qaboos took over the government from his father.<sup>3</sup>

### The Threat Environment

Threats in the Gulf region came from various sides. First, the Soviets' post-World War II occupation of northern Iran and later their 1979 invasion of Afghanistan showed how Soviet aspirations could be transformed into military operations aimed in the direction of the Gulf. The danger of communist subversion was the biggest worry of all monarchical states. Finally, Iran's and Iraq's growing power and their apparent ambition to annex land always remained a threat to the smaller and weaker countries of the Gulf.

Six days after Kuwait's independence in 1961, Iraqi leader Abdul Karim Qasim claimed Kuwait as an integral part of Iraq. At a press conference, he asserted that Kuwait belonged to Iraq because it had been a district of Basra province under the Ottoman Empire. The Iraqi claim was dropped only after UK and Arab League forces went to the aid of Kuwait. In 1973, Iraqi troops occupied a border post in northeastern Kuwait. This time the dispute centered on Bubiyan and Warbah, two Kuwaiti islands which control access to Umm Qasr, Iraq's military Gulf port. Only in 1977 did both sides withdraw their forces from the border area.

A few hours before the British pulled out of their Gulf commitments in 1971, the Iranian government invaded and took control of three islands in the mouth of the Gulf and, because of the other Gulf states' weakness, the Iranians were not seriously challenged. That action by the Iranian government was the first

sign of an internal military threat to the area. Immediately after that followed a coup d'etat in South Yemen which brought into power the first communist regime in the Arabian Peninsula. More recently, the whole area has been living in a period of tension since revolutionary forces took over in Iran and attempted to spread Islamic fundamentalism to the rest of the Gulf.

Surrounded therefore by various degrees of threat, the Gulf states' rulers realized the need to establish a common military policy to deter hostile action against their countries.

#### AIM

The aim of this paper is to discuss what arrangements are required among the Gulf Cooperation Council member states in order to deter future aggression and, if deterrence is found to be inadequate, what measures could be taken to enhance their defense.

#### ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Since the start of the seventies, and the achievement of full independence, the newly emerged states of the Arabian Gulf have grown closer and sought to cooperate in various fields as members of one family, paving the way toward the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Many collective efforts had already been made in many fields prior to the formal GCC agreement. The outbreak of war between Iraq and Iran in September 1980 might have been a catalytic factor which prompted the establishment of the GCC in February 1981.

The primary purpose behind the organization was to further already existing cooperation and to carry out new regional projects that would serve the interests of the people in the region. Areas of joint action included economic arrangements, industrial and town planning, defense and security consultations, and foreign and Arab policy coordination.

The actual signing of the GCC Charter did not take place until 25 May 1981 at Abu Dhabi, when the rulers met in the first GCC Summit Conference. The signatories were the leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and the states of Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait. The exclusion of Iraq from membership--a question that in fact delayed until 4 February 1981 the announcement of the intention of its members to create the GCC--was partly a reflection of Iraq's previous policies in the Gulf region and the nature of its regime. But more important is the fact that the six member states have so much in common historically, culturally, and ethnically--a homogeneity not shared by Iraq.

Both revolutionary Iran and Soviet-backed Iraq were regarded as anti-monarchical states. Their powerful military forces, coupled with a clear ideological divergence from the GCC states, were additional causes for concern. If there was any reason for the GCC states to cooperate in collective security, it would be because of threats from these two powerful neighbors.

#### Defense Strategy of the GCC

Faced with a number of potential threats, both internal and external, the GCC states began to formulate a collective defense

strategy. Some progress was made on cooperative air defense. Elements of their ground forces participated in mostly bilateral combined maneuvers, and intelligence sharing among the six was facilitated at an early stage.<sup>4</sup> In 1985 meeting of the Supreme Council (of the rulers), security was a dominant concern. Security had become even more important because of the rising wave of terrorism in the region which was viewed as an attempt to replace some existing regimes with presumably pro-Iranian ones. The unsuccessful plot in Bahrain in 1981, the bombings in Kuwait in 1984 and 1985, and the assassination attempt on the life of the Amir of Kuwait in 1985 were all seen by the members of the GCC as attempts to cause disruption in their countries from within.

In order to counter threats from within, and be prepared also to deter aggression from their potential enemies from outside, the member states realized it was necessary to modernize and increase their military capabilities. They also concluded that, because they were faced with potential enemies much more powerful and experienced than any of the GCC states, they ought to agree on a joint defense strategy. This belief was clearly reflected in statements made by Gulf officials regarding coordination and the desire to unify defense policies under the GCC umbrella.

Commenting on certain reservations by some critics of the Council's formation, King Khaled noted that "the Council is not a military bloc against any power. We are a fraternal group seeking the welfare and stability as well as the security of our people."<sup>5</sup> The late Saudi monarch's statement in fact sums up the first principle of the GCC strategy for defense. The second principle

is based on collective defense of the member states. This provides that a hostile act against any GCC state will be viewed as hostility against all other members. The third principle asserts that the GCC military force is not offensive in character, nor is it directed against any particular state in or outside the region, but rather is set up as a defense capability to guard against dangers that might arise. The fourth principle in the defense strategy is that the GCC military force is inseparable from that of the Arab nation because of a common cause and destiny. In this respect, the GCC force will not be concerned with the Gulf alone, but will support Arab and Muslim causes generally, including the Palestinian cause.

#### Military Capabilities

Britain had maintained a military presence in the Gulf region for over 150 years. Its withdrawal in 1971 inevitably created a security vacuum in the region. The Gulf states had, therefore, to focus on the issue of defense and national security as a matter of urgency. Self-defense from potential threats by other regional actors with more developed economic and military capabilities was an absolute necessity. Financial resources were therefore directed toward the procurement of weaponry and support systems that were indispensable for military operations. These initiatives included the construction of airfields, naval ports, radar networks, command, control, communication, and intelligence (C3I) systems, supply depots, maintenance and repair facilities, and army bases. In fact, a large part of defense expenditure was on infrastructure and support systems development.



The total force of the six Gulf states incorporates more than 164,000 men serving in three basic military services. The inventory includes some 1,072 battle tanks, 804 pieces of artillery, 370 combat aircraft, and 108 helicopters. The GCC states obtain their equipment mainly from Western sources such as the United States, Britain, France, and Germany. A recent breakdown of manpower and main equipment of the forces of the GCC states is shown below:<sup>6</sup>

COUNTRY	MANPOWER (ACTIVE)	TANKS	ARTILLERY	COMBAT AIRCRAFT	HELICOPTERS	FRIGATES AND MISSILE CRAFT
Saudi Arabia	65,000	550	450	180	20	21
Sultanate of Oman	25,500	39	75	63	23	12
United Arab Emirates	43,000	130	155	60	19	15
Bahrain	3,350	54	20	12	8	6
Qatar	7,000	24	14	19	20	9
Kuwait	<u>20,300</u>	<u>275</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>23</u>
TOTAL	164,150	1,072	804	370	108	86

The following is a breakdown from the same source of forces of the neighboring countries prior to the recent war over Kuwait:

COUNTRY	MANPOWER (ACTIVE)	TANKS	ARTILLERY	COMBAT AIRCRAFT	HELICOPTERS	DESTROYERS, FRIGATES, AND MISSILE CRAFT
Iran	604,500	550	900	190	110	42
Iraq	1,000,000	5,500	3,700	510	160	43
Yemen	64,000	1,140	810	230	12	8

#### BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

By the mid-1980s, three sets of events had radically transformed the stability of the Gulf. They were the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iraq-Iran war. The magnitude and extent of implications of these events for the GCC states were simply too big and complicated for the small and weak states to handle individually. In fact, some of the threats were too big even for a combined GCC effort. To counter these threats, therefore, the six states had to resort not only to a cooperative security arrangement among themselves, but also to involvement of major outside powers by internationalizing the crises.

#### Iranian Revolution

The Iranian revolution had three main implications for the Arab Gulf states. First, it removed the Shah who was probably the most effective regional deterrent to Soviet advances in the region during the Cold War period. Secondly, once Khomeini consolidated his control of Iran, he sought to spread his revolutionary ideology throughout the region by agitating Shiite populations in

the Gulf. Third, there always was a suspicion that the new Iranian regime might act aggressively against some of the states. The continued occupation of Abu Musa and the Tunbs islands, the renewed claim on Bahrain, the string of bombings in Kuwait, and turmoil in Mecca are all supportive of this suspicion.

All six states rely on regional and international expertise for military and technical assistance. In response to the Bahraini coup attempt of December 1981, which, allegedly, was Iran's plot, Saudi Arabia signed bilateral internal security arrangements with four of its five GCC partners. Only Kuwait refrained from signing. Within a month after the coup attempt, Bahrain called for the formation of a GCC Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). This led to a joint military command for the GCC states; and the first joint field exercise took place in October 1983. Because of its small size, the GCC RDF cannot be considered as a serious deterrent force against major outside invasion. The joint security arrangement is, however, capable of dealing with most foreseeable internal threats, either by the exchange of information, as in the case of the Bahrain coup attempt, or by deterring or preempting subversive actions.

#### Iraq-Iran War

The outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war presented one of the most serious situations for the GCC states. The conflict, which started on 22 September 1980 when Iraq launched a large-scale attack on Iran, soon began to affect the Gulf States in one way or another.

From the outbreak of war to the time of the establishment of the GCC, the conflict underwent four distinct phases: The period before September of escalating tensions and incidents on the border; the Iraqi offensive of 22 September; the Iranian strikes in November on the Iraqi oil infrastructure; and a period lasting through May 1981 in which no major victories were achieved by either side.

The first three phases took place in a short period of time. In fact, the nonbelligerent regional states were not affected during this time and could not anticipate that the war would enter into its seven-year phase of attrition. It was during this fifth phase, when the two combatant countries had started to experience an enormous drain on their economies, that the Arab Gulf states extended financial support to Baghdad in the way of loans or grants. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in fact, were the principal supporters of Iraq while the other states remained more or less neutral. This support naturally prompted Iran to consider the Gulf states as enemies. Immediately, Iran began to carry out subversive activities in the member countries. Such acts took either the form of highly visible public disruptions, including attacks on public leaders, or military strikes on economic targets.

Although there were several subversive acts during this period, four incidents in particular were more significant to the security of the GCC states. The first such incident was the December 1981 coup attempt in Bahrain. Reports suggest that the coup attempt was uncovered by airport officials in Dubai and

relayed to the appropriate authorities in Manama. On 22 May 1982, the Bahrain Supreme Court convicted 73 Shiite Muslims on charges relating to the attempt.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, in September 1982 the Grand Mosque in Mecca was seized by Shiite armed radicals during the annual hajj or pilgrimage. The Saudi forces, however, were finally able to extricate the armed radicals.

The third incident occurred on 5 June 1984 when Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) fighter aircraft engaged Iranian fighters entering Saudi Arabian air space, downing an Iranian aircraft in the process. The event represented the first direct conflict between the GCC states and Iran.

The final, and most serious, incident was the assassination attempt on the Amir of Kuwait on 25 May 1985, with a suicide car-bomb. This came following a string of bombings in public areas on 12 December 1983, killing eight and wounding 65 people. Six persons were condemned to death on 27 March 1984 for involvement in the attacks. Subsequently, a Kuwaiti commercial airliner was taken over on 4 December 1984 by terrorists demanding release of 17 prisoners arrested in Kuwait for bombings.

#### Kuwait Invasion Crisis

The invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 was carried out by Iraqi forces with very little resistance. Within five hours, 100,000 Iraqi troops crossed the border and encircled the capital. Kuwaiti forces were outnumbered 26 to 1. The only significant Kuwaiti resistance was made by the air force, which put up a short-lived defense at the start of the Iraqi invasion, then

escaped to Saudi Arabia. There was no time for the GCC Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), "Peninsula Shield," to make any response to the attack--not that it would have made much difference even if it had deployed.

Although there had been ominous Iraqi troop movements prior to the invasion on 2 August, the Kuwaitis did not believe that Iraq would attack. They thought that the Iraqis were simply trying to bully Kuwait into yielding to economic demands. Some analysts stated that Kuwait had made several fatal mistakes. One, Joseph Kostiner, an Israeli historian of the Gulf, said that the Kuwait government failed to grasp Iraq's determination after the war to get the money it needed for development and to gain a permanent, secure outlet to the Gulf. He observed that "Saddam knew that the Shatt Al-Arab was not navigable, that he was deeply in debt, that Kuwait was the solution to both these problems." Kostiner was of the opinion that Kuwait had grown "overconfident" during the Iraq-Iran war. The Al-Sabah believed that Saddam would never attack a country that had contributed more than \$10 billion in aid to his country. "Kuwait developed what was, in retrospect, an unjustified sense of security because of its role as a donor and mediator," Kostiner added. "It provoked Iraq by starting to build a city on the island of Bubiyan, disputed territory in Iraq's eyes."<sup>8</sup>

Another analyst, Theodore Draper, argued that Kuwait was "too rich to be left alone and too weak to defend itself." In other words, a small, weak, and oil-rich country in the most turbulent part of the world would always need an obvious protector. In 1899

it had the British. In 1987 it had the Americans. In 1990 it had no one other than the GCC.<sup>9</sup>

As far as Iraq's invasion is concerned, GCC intelligence failed to interpret the full implications of Iraq's threat. Once the invasion was carried out and Kuwait was annexed, no military attempt was made by the GCC forces to counterattack, for obvious reasons. An attempt was made, however, to find a peaceful solution, "an Arab solution," which the GCC states thought might be acceptable to Iraq. It soon became evident that an Arab solution was not going to work, either because of Saddam's reluctance to withdraw from Kuwait or because of disagreement among the Arabs; and so the so-called Arab solution was buried in the early days of the crisis. After the crisis had been internationalized and became the responsibility of the United Nations Security Council, the Arab countries could not possibly resolve it.

#### SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH MAJOR OUTSIDE POWERS

Throughout the recent history of the Gulf, events have shown that at one time or another, the GCC states essentially needed to have a sound security arrangement with major outside powers for the sake of their very existence. During the Cold War, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for example, posed a threat to the six monarchical states, and, without the United States, there was nothing these states could have done to deter the Soviets from extending their invasion to include the Gulf region if that had been their intent. Considering the fact that the GCC states were

already surrounded by countries such as Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Ethiopia, the evidence of communist/socialist encroachment was quite obvious. The Gulf states would have been potentially helpless without the support of Western allies. The dependence on allies was also well demonstrated during both the Iraq-Iran war and the Kuwait crisis.

#### Iraq-Iran War

Although the Iraq-Iran war served to accelerate the establishment of the GCC and the formalization of defense cooperation, it also demonstrated the inadequacy in the GCC states' security forces. While the combined GCC forces might help to prevent internal threats in individual states, they were not strong enough either to deter or to handle a genuine invasion from either Iraq or Iran. Therefore, in many situations, the GCC states prefer the use of negotiations as the ideal method for solving disputes.

When air attacks were launched against oil tankers in the Gulf, the Foreign Ministers of the six Gulf states decided to refer the issue to the United Nations Security Council since the attacks constituted threats to international peace and security. In view of these attacks, Sultan Qaboos said that in the event of obstruction of navigation in the Hormuz Straits owing to the Iraq-Iran war, the matter would become a collective Gulf and international responsibility, not merely the responsibility of the Sultanate of Oman alone, since the Strait is regarded as an outlet for all Gulf states, not only for oil exports but also for all forms of trade. In 1984, the GCC member states called for the



convening of an extraordinary meeting of the Security Council to discuss the Iranian air attacks against shipping. The Security Council adopted a draft resolution filed by the GCC countries. The resolution called, inter alia, for observing the freedom of navigation in international waters, and for taking "effective measures" if air attacks continued against shipping.<sup>10</sup>

However, the GCC member states were anxious not to escalate tension in the region. On the contrary, they stressed their deep commitment to reestablishing peace and freedom of navigation and reconciling the two neighboring Islamic belligerents.

#### Kuwait Reflagging Crisis

In the spring of 1984, the intensification of strikes on vessels in the Gulf, the so-called tanker war, and threats by Iran to close the Straits of Hormuz, drew the GCC states even deeper into the conflict. The war at this time, in fact, was becoming an international concern because of the threat to the supply of some 70 percent of the oil requirements of industrial countries.

From the outset, the GCC states had extended moral and then financial support to Iraq. The spread of hostilities to include shipping coincided with increased GCC support for Baghdad. In addition, Iraq received the support of many other countries of the world. In the case of the United States, the reason for support of Iraq was threefold: first to ensure the free flow of oil, secondly to punish the Iranians because of the American hostage crisis, and third to regain some of the credibility lost in the Beirut disaster and in the Iran-Contra Affair. The American support was of vital importance to Iraq, for without it Baghdad,

more than likely, would have lost the war, an outcome which the U.S. and the GCC states were keen to avoid.

The attack on shipping and the Iranian threat to close the Straits of Hormuz indicated, once again, the shortfall in GCC deterrence credibility. It was only by reflagging Kuwaiti tankers with Soviet and American flags that shipping was made safe. Likewise, only the presence of the major powers' naval forces in the region may have deterred the Iranians from attempting to block the Straits.

#### Kuwait Invasion Crisis

According to the GCC resolution that "any aggression on one of the states could be considered an aggression on all," the GCC states had no choice other than to resist Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The GCC Defense Ministers held their ninth conference since the formation of the GCC, and their first since 2 August 1990, on 4 December 1990 in Riyadh. They all expressed support for the steps taken by Saudi Arabia under King Fahd's leadership. They also condemned Kuwait's occupation by Iraq and hailed countries that abided by UN Security Council resolutions on the embargo against Iraq. The Defense Ministers commended countries that contributed to the multinational force in the region to assist GCC states in confronting the aggression, liberating Kuwait, and restoring its legitimate government.

Worthy of note is the likelihood that had there been no security assistance from the world community in general, and the United States in particular, Saddam would have extended his

invasion to Saudi Arabia and perhaps to the rest of the Gulf. It was only the pre-crisis security arrangements and the major powers' interests in the region that halted Iraq's aggression.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

### New Strategy

Global political, economic, and military forces were set into motion to liberate Kuwait. This concerted action will profoundly influence the region for decades. As leaders of the 28-nation coalition victorious against Iraq, the United States is viewed as responsible both for the success of military operations in Desert Storm and for shaping the post-war environment.

Until its 1971 withdrawal from east of Suez, Britain policed the area. Afterward, to fill the resulting void, the Nixon Administration established what was known as the "Twin Pillars" policy of relying on two moderate regional states--Iran and Saudi Arabia--to do the job. The Iranian Revolution effectively eliminated the stronger pillar, Iran; now, a decade later, the Iraqi invasion demonstrated the inability of the other, Saudi Arabia (and its GCC partners) to deter regional aggression. The present post-war situation offers an opportunity to design and implement a new regional strategy: readily available U.S. military assistance backing up the creation of a new regional balance of power.

While the fragile Arab consensus has been weakened even further by the Gulf war, it may safely be assumed that the consensus in the six Gulf states has been strengthened as far as

the strategy of having a "collective security backed up by the United States" is concerned. Although it may be too early to predict the shape and size of either the collective force or of U.S. support, there are already indications that a consensus is forming along these lines. For example, the Saudis' invitation to United States ground forces, while it could not be conceived of earlier on, is now to be expected in case of another aggression of this magnitude. The agreement to allow a U.S. command facility in Bahrain is another example. In addition, several meetings are already being held at a very senior level, presumably to discuss ways and means of enhancing collective security as well as "Host Nation Support" (HNS) to U.S. forces.

#### Prospective Threat Environment

There are two components of the security challenge to GCC states: internal threats and external threats.

Internal Threats. Internal threats in turn pose three broad challenges to these states. First, there is a challenge to each state's intelligence capabilities, especially posed by the problem of infiltration. Second, there is a challenge to each state's security forces which, with the help of intelligence, should be prepared for violence before it erupts. Third, the states must protect likely targets from violence.

Intelligence: Sources of intelligence in the Gulf states are, in fact, reasonably adequate. For example, most Shi'a organizations in Saudi Arabia or Bahrain have been well infiltrated by security agents, and such is also the case with insurgents in Oman and Palestinians in Kuwait (before the

invasion). Having said that, it is admitted that the intelligence mechanism can never be fool-proof. In two instances it failed when religious fanatics took over the Mecca Mosque, and when Iraq invaded Kuwait. However, exchange of intelligence was able to prevent Shi'a conspirators from staging a coup in Bahrain.

**Security Forces:** Each individual state's security forces are adequate to handle most foreseeable domestic problems. However, threat from the forces themselves can never be ruled out. While there is a genuine requirement to build up the forces if they are to deter any external aggression, there is also the risk that large forces may threaten the existing regimes. It is imperative therefore to strike a workable balance between the two considerations. One way of doing this is to make sure that the GCC RDF is always strong enough to deter any one of the individual forces attempting to seize power.

**Protecting Targets:** All six states deploy Royal Guard units to protect members of the ruling families. However, it is doubtful if targets such as oil rigs and military installations are sufficiently protected to stop a determined attacker.<sup>11</sup>

### External Threats

External threats have been held in check mainly by regional power balances. It is not surprising that the GCC states preferred that no clear winner emerge from the Iraq-Iran war. Nevertheless, this did not prevent Iraq from attacking Kuwait. In fact, a state as small as Kuwait, rich and located in a place as vulnerable as it is, is very hard to defend. Bahrain is another such vulnerable target and so is Hormuz.

To be sure, the peninsular states are dwarfed, in military terms, by the major states around them. Although Israel has demonstrated that small states need not be militarily weak, the GCC states face rather different problems. Realizing their weakness, these states have often tried to control their environment by diplomacy. Recent events, however, have proved that diplomacy does not always work. Diplomacy, like many other instruments, depends on intelligence. If intelligence fails to interpret the situation correctly, the result may be as grim as the Kuwait crisis turned out to be.

Finally, external threats may sometimes be brought about by internal problems in the peninsula. Internal events which may affect the interests of outside nations may have the potential to invite intervention by such nations. For example, if the Shi'a Muslims in Bahrain or Saudi Arabia were to stir up trouble, there is a danger of Iran wanting to come to the support of the Shi'a.

#### Prospective Security Cooperation

Logistics Problems. In discussing military cooperation in the six GCC states, it is appropriate first to discuss the problems facing such cooperation. First and foremost is the logistics problem. Since these states buy their equipment from several suppliers, there is no compatibility in spares, ammunition, and even sometimes the type of fuel used. Second, the standard of training is not the same.

Having said that, it can be argued that the multi-nation forces joining in the war against Iraq apparently operated smoothly and effectively under one command. What we must realize

though, is that this was a one-time operation after which each contingent returned to its respective country. In the case of a multilateral GCC force, it is a perpetual organization which requires logistics backing all the time. The fewer the types of unlike-items in the inventory, the easier and the more economic it will be to maintain and train. This, however, is not an unknown problem and efforts are being made to streamline the inventory. Besides, a lot of work has already gone into the production of common Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) which will enlighten the task of common training and joint field exercises.

Collective Security Strategy. Similarly, in discussing military cooperation, we must ask: "What does the collective security arrangement aim to achieve?" The answer may be divided. (1) In the short-term, collective security must be capable of deterring any domestic uprisings and, failing that, the collective forces must be capable of defeating any such uprisings. Moreover, the collective security forces must be capable, with prior arrangements with allied major powers, to deter external aggression. Failing that, the collective forces must have the ability to stand against an external attack long enough to allow allied forces to arrive for their support.

(2) The long-term aim must be to develop a collective security force capable of meeting any external threat. One essential characteristic for the combined forces to be effective is that they must have a rapid deployment capability. This is crucial.

As we have seen earlier, a number of factors in the six states are favorable toward a collective security arrangement among them:

They share the same history; they have the same ethnic background, same language, and same religion; they are faced with common threats; they have the same economic interests; and, above all, they all have constitutional monarchical governments.

A solid background effort has been made in developing a combined force--the Duraa-al-Jazirah ("Peninsula Shield"). The combined force, which is two brigades strong, may be strong enough to deter domestic uprisings--bearing in mind that if one country's forces rise against the government, the combined Rapid Deployment Force may receive support from forces in the other five states. It is realized, however, and recent experience has borne this out, that neither the RDF nor the total forces available in the six states are yet strong enough to either deter or fight an aggressor such as Iraq or Iran.

While the rulers of the six states were always aware of this shortfall, they were always working toward building up a force which would eventually be strong enough to face external threats. Looking at how smoothly these arrangements were developing, there is no reason to doubt that they can achieve their ultimate aim. The Kuwait invasion has helped to strengthen the six leaders' determination to cooperate. It has also helped them to gauge the magnitude of the potential threat and, most of all, it has emphasized the need to speed up the development of forces in order to increase their capabilities in size, technology, and training.

There is a window of opportunity, following the successive defeats of Iran and Iraq in 1988 and 1991, for the GCC to strengthen its side of the Gulf balance-of-power triangle. The



only long-term solution to the problem of their security is for the GCC states to raise the size and capability of their combined forces to ensure that they are credible in the Gulf in the face of the revived capabilities of Iran and Iraq. There are both the reasons and means to do that.

Manning. Most Western countries question the ability of the Gulf states to raise a force of, say, half a million strong, made up purely of indigenous citizens. In this writer's view, this is not a major obstacle. Half a million out of a combined population of 15 million should not be a problem, especially when considering that young school-leavers are becoming more and more attracted to joining the armed forces. The Kuwait crisis has probably helped to increase this impulse even more. For example, in Oman a few years ago, the armed forces had to make special efforts to get recruits. Now, even without such efforts, the recruiting officers receive four to five times as many applicants as they need. This, in fact, has led the armed forces to be more selective. Previously, young men with only four to six years of education were accepted as privates, whereas now only nongraduate high school dropouts are taken as private recruits. As far as officer cadets are concerned, in the Omani Army, one has to have at least a high school certificate; in the Omani Air Force and Navy, only graduates are accepted. The point is that it is not only possible to obtain the number of recruits required to form a larger force, but that the standard of education can also be expected to rise significantly.

Host Nation Support. For the U.S. forces to be able to deploy rapidly and in a combat ready state, the Gulf countries might provide a fair amount of Host Nation Support (HNS). The objective of the HNS program would be to reduce deployment time to a minimum, as well as to reduce the cost to the United States. To facilitate HNS, the Gulf states might enter into formal agreement with the United States, which would establish specifics including the type, quantity, and location of support to be provided, and when the support is to be available. The following proposed definition of Host Nation Support in a study of NATO HNS is equally applicable to the Arabian Peninsula.

HOST NATION SUPPORT. Civil and military assistance rendered in wartime to U.S. forces and organizations located on the host nation's territory or in contiguous seas; the basis of that assistance is commitments arising from bilateral agreements executed with the host nation.

The three biggest challenges are:

- . Time;
- . Distance;
- . Movement of thousands of troops and large quantities of equipment.

Because the total GCC forces are not capable of deterring outside attacks or holding ground for more than a few days in case of such attacks, it is imperative that outside assistance should be able to arrive at the scene in a matter of days, if not hours. Host Nation Support may be the cheapest option to reduce the deployment time.

The distance from the United States to the Arabian Peninsula

is some 9,500 miles. Coupled with an inadequate lifting capacity, the turn-around time for distances like this stretch the resources even more, resulting in delays which may at times be critical. It took, for example, a good four months for the U.S. forces to be combat-ready in Saudi Arabia. If Iraq had decided to continue the attack into Saudi Arabia, the allied forces would have suffered severe casualties. Besides, the war would have taken longer and would have required a much higher cost.

Desert Shield/Storm saw the largest deployment effort since the Vietnam War. The government contracted with commercial carriers to assist in the massive movement of people and equipment. Desert operations require great quantities of water because of the heat. Soldiers must drink 4 to 6 gallons of water each day to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration. Water needs to be transported and stored in large containers and truck-mounted tanks. There were many other logistics support challenges that armed forces in the desert must consider, and these can be made easier with the help of a HNS program. Petroleum providers, for example, are faced with increased demands for fuel, particularly for fighter and bomber aircraft. Food storage and distribution in a hot climate enhances the chances of food spoilage, which in turn may cause food poisoning with resulting increased medical care.

In order to minimize the challenges and so facilitate a quick response time by U.S. forces in a future Gulf crisis, as well as to reduce costs and enhance sustainability, the Gulf states ought to be prepared to provide maximum Host Nation Support possible.

The following are some of the areas where such support can be provided.

Pre-Positioning of War Material: Agreement must be reached between the U.S. government and the Gulf states to allow pre-positioning of war material on land and in contiguous seas. In the Gulf crisis, the nearest U.S. contingent was the Navy maritime pre-positioning ships from Diego Garcia and Guam. These ships carried tanks, artillery, ammunition, food, water, fuel, and supplies capable of sustaining 17,000 troops for 30 days. Had there been more pre-positioning facilities in the area, the deployment of U.S. forces would have been quicker and perhaps less costly.

Transportation and Material Handling: This function includes facilities required for the movement of personnel and handling and transportation of cargo, as well as temporary storage of cargo, ammunition, and bulk POL in the host nation, in areas specified below:

- Sea/air Ports. This includes reception and departure of ships and aircraft in the host nation and the performance of tasks necessary to unload and load inbound or outgoing cargo, personnel, munitions, etc. It includes material handling and temporary storage required. It also includes tasks such as servicing of aircraft and refueling and replenishment of ships. Included are equipment and material such as cranes, forklifts, and container handling equipment, buses, trucks, etc.

- In-Theater Movement. This includes in-theater movement of personnel and material from in-theater locations (e.g., storage sites for pre-positioned material).

Facility Usage: This includes facilities and other real property such as airfields, ports, installations, hardened sites, shelters, accommodations, etc.

Engineering Support: This includes facilities required for engineering support such as airfield damage repair, road repair, construction equipment and material.

Base Operation: This includes base/installation administration, e.g., ADP services, information and legal activities, civilian and military personnel administration, local transportation, laundry, food services, etc.

Security and Control: This includes security of airfields, ports, installations, supply routes, and rear areas. It also includes control of traffic and handling and security of prisoners of war (POWs).

In sum, much more can be done along the lines suggested above on a bilateral HNS basis. The time for the Desert Shield build-up may not be available in a future crisis.

#### CONCLUSION

The Arabian Gulf region has been a major international hot spot for many years. War or the threat of war has pervaded the area. This paper has looked into the ways the GCC member states have met the challenges and how they stood united, with the support of major allied powers, to face the most recent threat in

their sincere attempt to ensure stability and security and to fight against terrorism as well as major external attacks. They believe that a united organization of the six states with a unified policy and strong economy can bring their states to the threshold of the twenty-first century with strong defense and security systems.

The Gulf states need arms, technology, training, and manpower. None of the six states believes its forces alone are capable of defeating likely future external opponents; nor are the combined forces as they are today capable of defeating a strong, determined aggressor such as Iraq before its recent defeat. The GCC members are therefore aware that only through coordinated effort by the six states, in which they establish their priorities and pool their resources to eliminate unnecessary duplications, will they be able to lessen their dependence on outside allied powers. The creation of the GCC joint force, Dura-al-Jazirah, in 1984 was a symbolic expression of solidarity. This is a strong basis upon which future GCC collective security and defensive policies can be based.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Gulf Cooperation--The Path to Progress, Prosperity and Unity, Ministry of Information, State of Qatar, November 1983, pp. 20-22.

2. This and the preceding paragraph are based largely on Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, Saddam Hussein (And the Crisis in the Gulf), pp. 177-78.

3. Gulf Cooperation, p. 23.

4. Thomas L. McNaugher, Arms and Oil, p. 128.

5. A Special Report Regarding the Convening of the Fifth Summit of the GCC in Kuwait, Kuwait, 1984, pp. 11-17.

6. Military Balance, 1989-1990, pp. 93-118.

7. Gulf Cooperation.

8. Saddam Hussein, pp. 214-15.

9. Ibid.

10. A Special Report Regarding the Convening of the Fifth Summit of the GCC in Kuwait, pp. 11-17.

11. McNaugher, Arms and Oil, pp. 87-159.

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